

March 28, 2022

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, Ranking Members Hwang, Somers, and Petit, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee,

***I write in support of HB 5397, An Act Declaring Gun Violence a Public Health Crisis and Establishing The Office of Gun Violence Prevention***

In 2013, the Connecticut General Assembly held a public forum at Newtown High School regarding gun violence. At that time, I offered testimony. Not much has changed in gun violence outcomes since then. So, I offer similar testimony again today.

I am a parent with three children who benefited from Newtown Public Schools, but who also were affected by a mass murder in Sandy Hook School in 2012. Before serving on the Newtown Public Schools Board of Education, I had a career in environmental health science. So, while the traumatic events of 2012 in Newtown gave me a very personal perspective on gun violence, I also see the issues from a risk assessment and public policy standpoint.

The EPA, the FDA, the CDC, the WHO, OSHA and NIOSH all use risk/benefit analysis to understand how to address threats to human health, whether the hazard is a virus, a bacterium, a new drug, radiation, or chemical. Gun violence must be addressed in the same way.

Research on gun violence is woefully underfunded. Billions of dollars are invested in research and health interventions to prevent hypertension, car accidents, and infectious diseases. Yet gun violence, which has similar impacts on mortality and morbidity is not nearly as well researched or prevented.

HB 5397 correctly proposes:

- ✓ treating gun violence as a public health issue
- ✓ empowering the Department of Public Health to determine research needs
- ✓ including data gathering and research capacity to drive evidence-informed solutions
- ✓ funding the problem commensurate with the magnitude of the issue

Please support the declaration of gun violence as a public health crisis and the establishment of an Office of Gun Violence Prevention.

Thank you for your dedicated work in Connecticut's public health policy,



Michelle Embree Ku, PhD

Newtown, CT